

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BUNDESTAG VP VISITS MALTA

1. THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE WEST GERMAN PARLIAMENT (BUNDESTAG), KAI UWE VON HASSEL, ARRIVED IN MALTA ON JULY 15, 1976 FOR AN UNOFFICIAL THREE-DAY VISIT. VON HASSEL, WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND A DIRECTOR OF THE KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION, WAS IN MALTA UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MALTESE (OPPOSITION) NATIONALIST PARTY.

2. THE MAJOR EVENT SCHEDULED BY THE NATIONALIST PARTY DURING VON HASSEL'S BRIEF VISIT WAS THE OPENING OF AN ACADEMY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DEMOCRATIC ENVIRONMENT, WHICH VON HASSEL OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED SHORTLY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL. THE ACADEMY, ESTABLISHED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP (PART OF THE KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION), IS TO "STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND LIBERTY BASED ON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES...". THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

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OF DIRECTORS OF THE ACADEMY IS DR. VINCENT TABONE, DEPUTY

LEADER OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY.

3. IN ADDITION TO MEETINGS WITH NATIONALIST PARTY LEADER DR. GEORGE BORG OLIVIER AND OTHER NATIONALIST PARTY OFFICIALS, VON HASSEL ALSO CONFERRED WITH DEPUTY (AND ACTING) PRIME MINISTER ANTON BUTTIGIEG AND ROVING MALTESE AMBASSADOR JOE ATTARD KINGSWELL.

4. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE, VON HASSEL VIGOROUSLY LASHED OUT AT SOCIALISM AS A MENACE TO FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY, CLAIMING THAT "THE BORDER BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM IS BECOMING MORE NARROW EACH DAY." "EXTREME LEFTISTS ARE TAKING CONTROL OF THE OLD LABOR AND SOCIALIST PARTIES", HE CLAIMED, AND ARE "PAVING THE WAY FOR COMMUNISM". "FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM AGAINST SOCIALISM", CONTINUED VON HASSEL, "ARE THE GERMAN AND OTHER CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, LIKE THE NATIONALIST PARTY OF MALTA". VON HASSEL STRESSED THE NEED FOR A UNITED EUROPE WITH A STRONG EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO SOLVE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING EUROPE TODAY, ADDING THAT "MALTA, TOO, WOULD GREATLY BENEFIT FROM THE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS OF A UNITED EUROPE".

5. DISCUSSING NATO, VON HASSEL SAID "THERE IS A WIDE CONSENSUS AMONG ALL RESPONSIBLE POLITICIANS AND EUROPEAN PEOPLES THAT NATO MUST CONTINUE TO BE STRONG IF PEACE IS TO BE PRESERVED". SHARING THIS DESIRE FOR A STRONG NATO, HE ADDED, ARE ALSO NEUTRAL COUNTRIES "SUCH AS AUSTRIA, SWEDEN AND SWITZERLAND".

6. NEWSPAPERS SUPPORTING THE NATIONALIST OPPOSITION QUICKLY SEIZED UPON VON HASSEL'S WARNINGS IN EDITORIALS AND ARTICLES WITH SUCH TITLES AS "ALL SOCIALISM PAVES THE WAY FOR COMMUNISM", AND "SOCIALISM IS A THREAT TO LIBERTY". THE REACTION BY THE LABOR GOVERNMENT THUS FAR HAS BEEN LIMITED TO COMMENTS AT POLITICAL MEETINGS, INCLUDING ONE BY FINANCE MINISTER JOSEPH ABELA TO THE EFFECT THAT VON HASSEL DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HE IS TALKING ABOUT AND THAT "WE TELL HERR HASSEL TO LEAVE MALTA AND NOT TO INTERFERE IN OUR POLITICS".

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7. COMMENT: THE VON HASSEL VISIT REPRESENTS AN EFFORT BY THE NATIONALIST PARTY TO PROVE THAT THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IS NOT ALONE IN HAVING CLOSE AND IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL TIES. NO UNEXPECTEDLY, VON HASSEL'S OUTSPOKEN COMMENTS TO THE PRESS VINDICATED AND REINFORCED THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ARGUMENTS OF THE NATIONALIST OPPOSITION. ALTHOUGH COLLEAGUES IN THE GERMAN EMBASSY STATE THAT THE LABOR

GOVERNMENT PRIVATELY HAS MADE ITS DISPLEASURE AT VON
HASSEL'S STATEMENTS QUITE CLEAR, THE PUBLIC REACTION OF
THE LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY MILD.
WHILE IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, THE "ACADEMY"
WILL PLAY IN THE FORTHCOMING MALTESE PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS, IT COULD BECOME A CONDUIT FOR CDU ASSISTANCE
TO THE NATIONALIST PARTY COMAPIGN. SMITH

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